

**Veterans Services Foundation
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2006**

A meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) was held on February 8, 2006 at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building in Richmond.

Members Present:

Vincent Burgess, Supriya Christopher, Lydia Dudley, Margaret Eure, Leroy Gross, John Hanson, Frank Louthan, Jr., Frederic Leigh, and Ray Smoot

Member Absent:

John Anderson

Others Present:

Don Ferguson, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
Greg Brittingham, Virginia Commonwealth University

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda; Draft Minutes of the November 16, 2005 Meeting; Virginia Department of Veterans Services Fact Sheet; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs News Release (February 6, 2006); Letter dated February 2, 2006 to Commissioner Burgess from Bill Van Thiel regarding use of \$7,100 of donations to be used for the purchase of televisions on the Alzheimer unit at the Virginia Veterans Care Center.

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees to order at 11:03 a.m. on Wednesday, February 8, 2006, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, located at 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond. The members recited the pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

Roll Call of Members and Quorum Determination

The roll was called and a quorum of six of ten members was recorded as present. Leroy Gross arrived after the roll was called.

Review and Approval of November 16, 2005 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the November 16th meeting were reviewed. Margaret Eure made a motion that the minutes be approved as written. Lydia Dudley seconded the motion. The motion was then approved unanimously.

Comments from Chairs

In the absence of Steven Combs and Roz Trent, Commissioner introduced Valerie Minné as the acting note taker.

Chairman Hanson gave initial comments regarding the upcoming planned Foundation retreat. Commissioner Burgess gave further comments and clarification and introduced Gregg Brittingham, the retreat facilitator.

Mr. Brittingham stated that he had spoken with Commissioner Burgess and his staff concerning the retreat and its hopeful outcomes. He explained that his facilitation is inter-active and inclusive of everyone's participation. He asked members of the Foundation to comment on their expected outcomes: Comments were as follows:

- Commissioner Burgess said that the Foundation mainly wants to shape what/who they are and where they want to be in the future, as well as how to interact with the other boards.
- Chairman Hanson spoke about wanting to clarify the charter, forming the structure. He emphasized that the work of the Foundation should be taken seriously. He stated that the necessity to have a retreat is a serious option.
- Ms. Dudley stated that the Foundation is in place to raise money for veterans' services. She posed the following questions:
 - Who are the stakeholders in this activity?
 - How will the Foundation get around those barriers?
 - What and who are the Foundation's alliances?

Mrs. Eure inquired whether or not the Foundation gave a year-end report statement. Commissioner Burgess responded that he was unaware if a year-end statement was given; however, a report is given to the Board of Veterans Services. Mrs. Eure stated that she was unsure of the Foundation's relationships with the other councils/boards. She inquired about the terms of appointments, and suggested the need for a defined strategic plan for the Foundation.

Chairman Hanson gave accolades and expressed his appreciation to Commissioner Burgess and his staff for the strategic overview of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) that had been sent via e-mail the previous week.

Mr. Leigh brought up the idea of having veterans' license plates. He questioned why people and groups have never gotten together to make this idea work. Mrs. Eure expressed her displeasure that the DMV receives the money for all the veterans' plates and that it was premature for the Foundation to have backed off the issue when it was first introduced.

Chairman Hanson stated that he believed there is a need for the Foundation to do something significant in order to get in on this constant stream of revenues. He expressed a need to expand the number of homes and services and also a need for a better working relationship with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He stated that the retreat would be a step in the right direction to accomplish this.

Commissioner Burgess stated that he said that the DVS will pick up the cost of Mr. Brittingham's services, and that Mr. Brittingham will be doing things before, during, and after the retreat. He stated that the Foundation's evolution is at a most critical point.

To that effect, Ms. Christopher stressed the need for the Foundation to develop a clear mission statement.

Mr. Brittingham stated that the Foundation would need a minimum of one half day for the retreat. Mr. Leigh was concerned if a 4-hour period would be long enough to accomplish all that needs to be done. Mr. Brittingham stated that it would be at a high level of activity to figure out where the Foundation sees itself, and there would only be discussions dealing with priorities at a strategy level.

Commissioner Burgess asked if April would be a good month to plan the retreat, and asked for suggestions regarding a date. Mr. Smoot suggested that the Commissioner poll the members with dates in April and let the membership choose a date most convenient. Mr. Brittingham suggested that the retreat begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m.

Chairman Hanson asked what the next steps would be. Mr. Brittingham stated that milestones would be established.

Commissioner Burgess stated that after the retreat, Mr. Brittingham would come to the next Foundation meeting and submit his report/findings.

Mr. Gross commented that the Foundation had been trying "to feel its way" and wanted to know if the Foundation was a unique organization or if there was a model in other states that could be mirrored regarding structure, membership, mission, etc. Chairman Hanson suggested that the Commissioner's staff contact other state directors and see that they are doing. He agreed that the Foundation needed to do something to get guidance. He stated that having this information, in addition to the retreat, should give good guidelines.

Mr. Leigh suggested using North Carolina and Kentucky as a model.

Mrs. Dudley stated that perhaps information on how the VA General Post Fund is managed would be helpful to the Foundation.

Mrs. Eure inquired how the Foundation could interact with the local groups that are active in the area who do not know about the Foundation.

Chairman Hanson asked for questions. Mr. Brittingham stated that form follows function and the Foundation should decide on the end result before anything else can be decided upon. He asked if there were other persons, other than Foundation members, who should attend the retreat. Suggestions were Dr. Anderson, Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services and Frank Wickersham, Chairman of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations.

Chairman Hanson again requested that Commissioner Burgess' staff poll the Foundation for possible workable dates in April for the retreat. Mr. Brittingham stated that the retreat should be scheduled on a date when at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the membership can attend.

It was the consensus of the group that the retreat be held at the American Legion Building.

Chairman Hanson thanked Mr. Brittingham for his willingness to facilitate the retreat.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Burgess reported as follows:

- Provided a fact sheet with information about DVS and key budget factors. He stated that his goal for this legislative session is about having the members and legislators make connections. He stated that he wanted to keep all of the boards apprised of what is going on within the General Assembly. He commented that DVS was very blessed with the budget that had been proposed.
- Discussed the status of the proposed third veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia. A potential cemetery site next to the Radford Army Ammunition Plant has 90+ acres. There is a problem, however, in that it may take up to 10 years for the land to be transferred from the Department of Defense to the Commonwealth of Virginia if normal channels and procedures are followed. To speed up the transfer process, veterans groups in Southwest Virginia are working with Virginia's Congressional Delegation on special legislation that would allow the land to be donated much sooner. Legislation before the General Assembly would allow DVS to accept the donated property.
- Discussed the need for a care center at Hampton Roads. One potential location is the Hampton VA Medical Center property, which has room for a 240-bed unit. Construction costs would be approximately \$42 million. The state share of construction costs would be approximately \$14.6 million. Two other potential locations, though lower in priority for care centers, are the Portsmouth Naval Base and Virginia Beach.
- Announced that Robert Shackelford was brought on as CFO to help with the infrastructure. Mr. Shackelford has already identified a financial management system that needs to be used and now is just trying to make it happen. The Commissioner suggested that Mr. Shackelford be brought in to brief the board of trustees at a later date. He said that he was thinking about bringing in contract help on financial matters. He stressed that he must move much of the department's administrative functions from

Roanoke to Richmond in order to be fully able to do the job he was appointed to do. He is also seeking a building in which he can house everyone.

Chairman Hanson thanked the Commissioner for his report. Mrs. Eure asked about the number of burial plots at the Horton Cemetery. She stated that the cemetery figures indicated a need to expand Hampton Roads even more. Commissioner Burgess concurred that there is a definite need.

Mr. Gross stated that he was encouraged by the Commissioner's desire to move the administrative functions to Richmond and have more access to the Governor.

Commissioner Burgess stated that he had discussed the move with Secretary Marshall, who is also in agreement with the move. He stated that he also wants to have a better relationship with public safety and other law enforcement officials.

Mr. Gross asked if Secretary Marshall was going to meet with the Foundation. Commissioner Burgess stated that he would invite Secretary Marshall to the retreat to meet everyone.

Commissioner Burgess discussed the quarterly Veterans Services Fund status spreadsheet. He stated that while the Foundation had approved the expenditure of \$50,000 for the replacement walking trail at the McGuire VA Medical Center, less than \$8,000 had been required. The unspent funds would be returned to the unrestricted sub-fund of the Veterans Services Fund. He also stated that funds were used for Operation Holiday Spirit. The remaining balance is \$9,726.80 and there have been no other changes since the last meeting.

Mr. Gross then asked about the possibility of appropriations to the Foundation Fund from the General Assembly. Commissioner Burgess responded that he did not want to ask until there was a game plan.

Chairman Hanson stated that the money that the Foundation holds falls under the purview of the State Comptroller.

Mrs. Eure asked why the Foundation had not asked for funds from the General Assembly. She stated that the foundation needed to put in a reasonable request for money to the General Assembly and to not to do so would be bad policy. Mr. Gross concurred that there needed to be an amount earmarked consistently for the Foundation.

Mr. Smoot suggested that the report show general sources of income, gifts and others. He would like to have a clear picture of where the money is coming from.

Mrs. Christopher inquired if there was a donor list somewhere. Commissioner Burgess stated that he was unsure. Mrs. Christopher stated that there needed to be a list and that the Foundation needed to be able to see it.

Mrs. Eure agreed with Mr. Smoot that the spreadsheet should show a beginning balance, expenditures and an ending balance. Although the spreadsheet was appreciated, she stressed the need for the suggested changes.

Further discussion ensued.

Mrs. Eure commented about seeing Colonel Van Barfoot on the Oliver North Show and suggested that the Foundation send Colonel Barfoot a letter congratulating him on his appearance. Commissioner Burgess agreed and stated that his office would draft a letter for the Chairman to sign.

New Business

There was no new business.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Determine Date and Location of Next Meeting

In lieu of a meeting, the Foundation will hold a retreat in the month of April. Members will be polled to determine a suitable date.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.